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American Pilots' Flying for Libya Is Said Not to Be in U.S. Interest.

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22 — The State Department said today that it was not in the national interest for American pilots and mechanics to work for the Libyan Air Force.

Responding to a report in The New York Times this morning that said Americans had been recruited to fly and maintain Libyan Air Force planes in an operation organized by Edwin P. Wilson, a former American intelligence agent, the department said it could not confirm that Americans were actually working for the Libyan military.

But a spokesman, Alan D. Romberg, said, "For some time we have been aware that some United States citizens may be involved in civil aviation in Libya."

U.S. Reluctant to Comment

He said that since last May, when all Libyan diplomats were expelled from this country, the United States had "repeatedly advised" Americans not to travel or live in Libya, a militant Arab nation in North Africa.

State Department and White House officials both here and in Cancún, Mexico, where President Reagan is attending a conference of developing and industrialized countries, appeared to be reluctant to comment on reports that Americans were involved in the air operations in Libya. Despite repeated requests for statements from several news organizations, officials here referred requests to senior officials in Cancún. White House officials, after consultation with senior State Department officials there, said they would have no comment.

When pressed to comment further on the report of Americans flying and maintaining Libyan planes, Mr. Romberg said, "It would not be consistent to suggest that such activity was in the United States national interest."

One Western pilot recruited by Mr. Wilson told an interviewer in London this week that American pilots flew helicopters in support of the Libyan intervention in Chad late last year. State Department officials said they had no independent confirmation of that.

Nevertheless, officials said that there had been documented cases in which

planes supposed to be part of the Libyan civil air fleet had been used to transport Libyan troops in recent years, most notably to Uganda in 1979 in a vain effort to prevent the overthrow of Idi Amin, the Ugandan ruler.

Military Used Civilian Planes

Officials said that while there was no documented evidence in their files linking Americans to the Libyan military, they said that Libyan practice showed that civilian planes had been used in military missions, and noted that the United States had refused in 1979 to go ahead with licenses to sell Boeing 747's to Libya even though Libya had said the planes would be used only in civilian operations.

There were also reports today that American air leasing companies had provided planes for transporting munitions from Syria to Libya.

George Batchelor, the major owner of the companies in question, International Air Lease Inc., of Miami, and Capital International Airways Inc., of Smyrna, Tenn., said that two of his planes, leased by Libyan airlines for a 45-day period each year, were employed solely to ferry Moslem pilgrims to Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

"If any military personnel or cargo came aboard, they wouldn't take off," he said in a telephone interview. Mr. Batchelor also said the State Department was informed about the Mecca pilgrim flights.

There are two civilian airlines in Libya. One is the Libyan Arab Airlines, which flies to points north of Libya, and the other is United African Airways, which flies to points south of Libya. Officials said there were extensive reports of Americans and other foreigners being recruited for United African Airways.

Relations between the United States and Libya are strained and rather unusual. In January 1980, mobs in Tripoli burned down the American Embassy. By March 1980, all American diplomats had been withdrawn.

Libyan diplomats were expelled from the United States last May because of what the State Department called Libyan support for "terrorism" abroad, including Libyan-sponsored murders of Libyan exiles. The Reagan Administration has also pledged to support any African country threatened by Libya.